

**STATEMENT ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEDERAL GUIDANCE  
ON INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (ITEK)**

**For Submission to [ITEK@ostp.eop.gov](mailto:ITEK@ostp.eop.gov) by May 5, 2022**

We, the undersigned, submit this joint statement on the White House's initiative to elevate Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) in Federal scientific and policy processes. We welcome your commitment to partner with Tribal Nations, Native communities and Native organizations to develop a guidance that respects indigenous lifeways and ensures that traditional knowledge is meaningfully included in federal policies that give voice to our Earth Mother and the knowledge holders of our communities.

In the federal context, the proper term should be "indigenous traditional knowledge," as our knowledge impacts more than ecology or science. Integrated within each of our communities are our senses of social and natural stewardship, particular to each tribal community. Both must be well-functioning in order for health and wellness of the whole, from past generations to future generations. The complete absence of our traditional knowledge from federal policies so far has brought us to a critical point of urgency. It is past time for a broad application of traditional knowledge in the governmental ordering of how we live and relate to our Earth Mother, which are interdependent.

Each community has a value system based on our particular land and our social order, therefore there is no one size fits all. This direct relationship gives substance to each of our value systems. If we are to build policies developed by the federal government with indigenous communities, the policies will need to maintain integrity at the human level. Present policies are built without regard to the environment as a living entity, and furthermore treat land as a commodity. Policies built on traditional knowledge cannot be hybridized with approaches that deny our Earth Mother as a living being in need of ongoing sustenance. This is why traditional knowledge holders have kept information close in the past. Our elders and knowledge holders will need assurances that upon sharing their knowledge, holistic integrity will be maintained with inclusion of ITEK. The guidelines must reflect this, in order for our knowledge holders to share medicine, and for medicine to be received in good faith.

Finally, there need to be mechanisms to allow traditional knowledge, individual to each community, to be shared and received as they are ready. We disagree with any emphasis on the government-to-government process being the exclusive means to obtain traditional knowledge. That is the wrong approach for traditional knowledge, especially at this time of urgency. Traditional knowledge holders are separate from tribal governments. Traditional knowledge holders are concerned with the relationship that we have with our Earth Mother, and not primarily concerned with our relationships with governments. Knowledge holders need the ability to directly share our knowledge with the federal government upon consensus of our communities, without undue barriers. Native organizations can help get out the knowledge that knowledge holders wish to share on a rolling basis. Such a mechanism may be on-line and via electronic communication with federal agencies, or via physical meetings, as each community is ready. The proper gathering of this information requires community consensus and needs to follow community timing. It may also need federal governmental funding.

The Federal Government's recognition of the critical importance of ITEK is an important first step we value and appreciate. We hold you to your commitment to including ITEK in federal

policy as shaped by communities who are trying to live according to our value systems despite governmental barriers. We thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,



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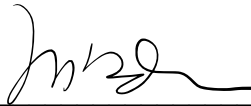
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*Planning for our children in a blessing manner*

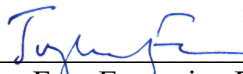
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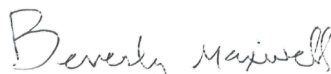
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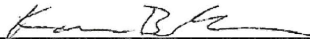
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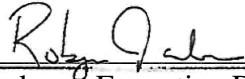


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